

BREAKING THROUGH

BY W. C. MORROW

Author of "A Man: His Mark"

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON M. McCOUCH



"RAY," said his mother, whom he shyly and secretly worshiped, without her ever suspecting the least of it beneath his cautious reserve and occasional outbursts of temper, "my son, I hope you will remember, to-night. You are nearly a man."

She was a wise woman, and said it kindly and meant it well; but his face flamed, his eyes hardened, and he sullenly walked away. Mrs. Gilbert sighed, and went about the preparations for the young people's party which her daughters, aged sixteen and eighteen, were to give that evening. She could not foresee what her son would do. Would her gentle warning, filled with the tender pride of a mother's love for her one man-child, drive him with his dog to the woods, whither many a time before this day a word less pointed had sent him, there to live for a week or longer at a time, in a manner that he had never disclosed?—or would the disjointed thing within him which harried his somber, lonely life force him in a blind moment to make a disgraceful scene at the gathering? She prayed that neither would happen, and that the sunshine fighting for egress through his darkness would come forth soft and genial and very fine and sweet, as it did sometimes, and always unaccountably.

The worst had happened at the party. No doubt it was intolerable,—but not so bad as when (he was then only four,) he had tried to kill a boy for lying about him and was whipped mercilessly by his father,—for here, in the library, he was sitting before Mr. Gilbert, who was pale and whose eyes had a deep, inscrutable look. He was a large and powerful man, and had a genial nature, with force and sternness. The lad had never seen him looking thus, and so evidently guarding a prisoner, and the boy felt a strange weight within.

Whatever had happened must have left a shadow on the assemblage, for, though faint sounds came through the closed doors, they were somewhat lacking in the robustness of youth. Ray did not deign an effort to remember. More than that, he hoped that it never would come back, for it might be disturbing to his solitudes. Of his attempts to remember the attack on the boy ten years ago, there had never come any result but the recollection of a wholly disconnected event,—when he was enveloped in a swirl of flame and smoke from a fierce grass fire, and had to fight his way through to life. He did not try to think what his father's purpose was in holding him a prisoner to-night. Was it to give him a lecture? Pshaw! The beautiful, peaceful woods would make him forget that child's-play, and he would steal away to them with Cap this very night, as soon as all were asleep.

Thus, motionless and in silence, sat he and his

father, seemingly through an endless, aching time. After a while the guests quietly left. His sisters omitted their customary good-night to their father. All sounds from the servants ended. Then entered his mother, uncommonly pale, and in silence looked from her son to her husband. She was small and dainty, and very, very pretty, the boy reflected. It was a pity that her bright eyes should be dim to-night and her sweet mouth drawn. She looked worn and as though she dreaded something.

"Are you ready?" Mr. Gilbert asked, regarding her fixedly.

Her lip trembled, but there came a flash from her eyes. "Do you really mean it?" she asked.

"Certainly. It must be done."

"My dear, dear, he's too large for—"

"He'll never be too large for it so long as he is a boor and coward, insults our guests, scandalizes us all, shames his sisters, and treats his parents with open scorn. He won't try to be like other people and accept his world as he finds it. His inordinate conceit is a disease. It is eating up his own life and making our lives miserable. We will cure it."

He had spoken calmly, but with a low vibration of tone; and as he came to his feet he looked very tall and terrible. Ray's blood began to rise, and as he looked about for something undefined he felt the heat and smelled the smoke of the grass fire of ten years ago.

He knew he was a coward. That was the shame and the curse of his life. He did not think it had always been so, but believed it had come about gradually. At first he had not minded the whippings that other boys gave him because of his temper and his physical inadequacy, for he had invited the punishment; but when they all learned that his fighting spirit had weakened, that they could whip him easily, that they need not wait for provocation, and that he would never tell, they bullied and hounded and beat him until he had come to know a craven, sordid fear, which spread from the boys to the whole terrible world in which the masculine entity must fight for a place.

"I am ready," said Mrs. Gilbert, trying to hide a sigh.

"Come," Mr. Gilbert ordered the boy, looking at him for the first time in two hours.

The boy quailed before that look, the most dreadful thing he had ever seen. It made him numb and sick, and when he rose he staggered; for, though tall, he was slender and had

little strength. The weight on his chest became a pain and fixed on his throat, to choke and torment him.

His mother had gone out. He followed his father, and the three went out into the back yard, the boy bareheaded. The night was sharp and the moon very bright. All the boy's power of thought was suspended.

In silence they walked down the terraces of the park-like yard in the rear. Cap, Ray's dog, his only intimate, came bounding forward for his young master's unfailing good-night, but Mr. Gilbert angrily ordered him away. The animal, astonished and hurt, slunk away, keeping a watchful view of the group, and sat down at a distance and gazed in wonder. They passed through a gate into an orchard, and shut the dog out.

Mr. Gilbert selected an apple tree, because the wood was tougher than that of a peach. From it he cut two switches a yard long, and carefully pared the knots, his wife observing without a word or a movement, and the boy looking away into the distance. When Mr. Gilbert had done, he ordered his son to prepare.

The lad numbly, dumbly removed his coat and waistcoat, slipped his suspenders down, tightened the strap at the back of his trousers, clasped his hands in front, and bowed his head. The dog, which had crept to the fence and was peering through the pickets, whined anxiously and was quivering. When roughly ordered away by Mr. Gilbert, he went upon a terrace that overlooked the fence, and trembled as he watched.

The boy did not once look toward him. He was struggling with the pain in his throat.

Mr. Gilbert offered one of the switches to his wife.

"Oh, how can you!" she pleaded.

"You must," he firmly said. "I'll relieve you when you are tired."

The boy's mind suddenly cleared, and he comprehended. A whipping from his father would be frightful enough,—not for the blows; they were nothing. The plan was not alone to humiliate him beyond all measure, but to scourge his soul, ravage the sanctuary of his mother there, rend him asunder, and cast him into an unthinkable hell of isolation; for she was the bond that held him to the world, she was the human comfort and sweetness of his life.

Since his tenth year his discipline had been solely in her hands; his father having given him up as worthless, hopeless. She had whipped him many a time, but not for two years; and he had felt no pain,



"He simply went on, thinking nothing, remembering nothing"

no shame, no outrage, no resentment. The case of the teacher was different. Ray had solemnly sworn, renewing the oath every day, that when he came to manhood he would beat his teacher to death for whipping him so often and severely because of his dullness, his apathy, or his rebellion; the whippings from his mother had only increased his tenderness for her, and, in some way that he could not understand, his pity also. Perhaps it was because he vaguely felt that she was impairing something in herself that was precious to him. Never had she conquered him; never had he cried out in pain, never pleaded for mercy, never confessed penitence nor promised reform.

Mrs. Gilbert shut her teeth hard, and, deathly white in the moonlight, raised the switch. It was poised a moment, and then her arm fell limp to her side; but the look that her son had seen in his father's eyes held her and steeled her with a sort of desperate madness, and her arm again rose.

A long cry, an anguished wail, almost superhuman in its power to shatter the silence of the night, and more startling than any human cry could be, struck disorganizingly through the drama. It may have hastened the catastrophe. Mr. Gilbert was unnerved for a moment, and in exasperation picked up a clod and threw it at the offending dog trembling on the terrace. When he turned again, his son was kneeling beside his unconscious mother, peering anxiously into her pallid face, and calling her softly.

In a stride Mr. Gilbert was upon him. A hand armed with strength and fury caught up the shirt on the lad's shoulder, raised him, and flung him away with so great violence that the slender body struck the ground as a log. Mr. Gilbert tenderly picked up his wife and bore her into the house.

The fall had half stunned the boy. As he slowly struggled to a sitting posture the moon danced fantastically, and some black trees crowning a near hill bowed and rose, and walked sidewise to and fro. A whine, low, cautious, packed with sympathy and solicitude, pleaded at the pickets, but the boy gave it no attention. He sat for a time, rose giddily, swayed as he dressed himself, and with deliberation walked to the gate. The dog, whining, trembling, crawled to meet him; but the boy, instead of caressing him, ordered him quietly but firmly to the kennel. Obedience was slow, and the animal looked up incredulous, wondering. The order had to be repeated. Finally the dog obeyed, frequently pausing to look back, but his master stood inflexible.

Passing round the house, and without thinking or caring about hat and overcoat, he noiselessly passed out the front gate, for a moment studied the big house that had cradled him, bred much of his anguish, and held all of his love, and firmly stepped out into the road. There was a gnawing ache somewhere. Assuredly that one blow—and from *her*—could not have caused it. After finding it in his throat, he was much relieved, and struck out on secure legs.

It did not occur to him that he was an outlaw and outcast. He did not think at all. Hence there was no plan in his going. He did not even understand that something deeper within him than had ever operated before had assumed, in the disqualification of his ordinary ruling powers, an imperious regency, and that it was infinitely greater or infinitely less than his usual intelligence. He simply went on, thinking nothing, remembering nothing. The beautiful highway, arched by great trees, above which rode the moon in keeping pace with him, was a tunnel under a luminous sea; he half walked, half floated, in the crystal water, and had no wonder that he breathed it. The houses along the way were the palaces of lordly gnomes that inhabited the deep.

Whatever was leading him turned him out of the avenue at last and drifted him along a

winding road that was as beautiful in *its* less conventional way. He did not reflect that all of this was familiar, shamefully familiar. It was the road to his grandmother's, but he had not visited her for a year.

Her great wisdom and tact had gone to a study of the strange, unhappy child; she had been kind to him in every cautious, delicate fashion that she could devise; but he had ceased coming, and avoided her when she visited his home, and she had never known why. She was a patient woman and good; she knew prayer, and in her peaceful twilight she walked with God; yet no revelation had come at her appeals, for the times were not ready; and the boy went his way alone and silent, forever alone and silent, and unhappy, unhappy!

A white picket fence was presently marching with him alongside the shining road. He did not consciously recognize it, and it brought no rekindling of an old terror, an old shame; but soon, on the other side of it, a distance away, there broke on the stillness a challenge that he remembered, and its tone was contempt. He understood it, and woke with a start, because of a sudden fluff of flame and a whiff of smoke from the grass fire of ten years ago, and the ache in his throat gave him a strangling wrench. His head rolled; the moon swung through an arc of alarming length. That call beyond the fence struck the dominant note of his life, and it was Fear. Yet it came from a mere animal,—his grandmother's old buckskin horse, the most docile of creatures.

Ray had never feared the wild things of the woods. The cry of the panther in the dead of night is dreadful, but it had no terrors for the boy in the forest solitude. Other fierce pad-footed members of the cat tribe had come and sniffed him as he lay under the stars, and experience had taught him to feign sleep, for a suspicion of his wakefulness would send them bounding away, and he was lonely, always lonely. One night, roused from slumber, he sleepily put his hand on the shaggy head of a bear that was curiously rummaging him, and he was sorry that the beast took alarm and trotted away,—he would have been comfortable to hug. That was before the dog had come into his life. He could never understand why he was not afraid of anything whatever—not even of the terrific lightning and thunder that sometimes flamed and crashed and belowered all about him,—except human beings and the forces that they controlled; and at times he wondered why Cap loved him and the buckskin horse would kill him from hate if he could.

Here, then, beyond the picket fence, was the proclamation of his shame,—coming from a gentle, superannuated horse with no more spirit than a snail's. By some means, perhaps instinctive,—for all the world, when it finds out, will hunt down and destroy whatsoever fears it, (although the boy had not reasoned it out thus,)—the beast had learned that the boy was afraid, and had then found an interest in life. Let him but have a glimpse of Ray, and, ears back, lips drawn from hideous yellow teeth, and head thrust horribly forward, he would snort, charge,—and the boy would run abjectly. The horse had never thus treated another living thing. So the boy had stayed away from his grandmother's, and she had never suspected, and her love and prayers had brought no revelation.

As the fence intervened, the horse knew that a charge would be useless; but when, with a neat leap, the boy nimbly caught his feet on the

ground within the pasture, the buckskin advanced in his minatory way. Ray did not know why he had leaped the fence, unless the wrench in his throat had hurled him over or the flame and smoke of the grass fire had driven him; nor did he know why he went steadily to meet the horse, nor why his nostrils stretched and his arms strained and his hands clenched, nor why there was a fierce eagerness in him; a rasping thirst for something dried his tongue. The horse came on, and the boy, perfectly calm, as fatally went to meet him. There was no calculation of results, yet the lad knew that a horse's teeth and hoofs may be deadly. He knew only that he was not going forward to end all his wretchedness, as, last year, the shoemaker who drank had done with a shotgun, and young Corson, the thieving clerk, with poison. It occurred to the boy that he cared nothing about the teeth and hoofs of any horse, and nothing about what they might do.

So ridiculous was the *fiasco* that he would have laughed had he not been sorry for the beast; for to see any rampant thing so suddenly stricken with fear, when there was not the least danger nor any intent of harm, was pitiful to



"She looked as if she dreaded something"

see. He wished to assure the buckskin that he was only a boy, a frail boy at that, and not what the animal had apparently taken him to be,—a spawn of Darkness and Terror. He followed up the trembling beast, trying to reassure him and to get near and pet him; but the creature fled wildly at every advance, and when not pursued stood with head aloft, ears cocked, and nostrils vibrant, quivering in fear.

Seeing the uselessness of further pacific effort, the boy sprang over the fence, went back to the main highway, and by the unseen Hand was led into the short cut past Mr. Elderby's house, where the greatest terror of his life—human excepted,—had months ago driven him to use the long way round. He did not know, nor for a moment consider, why he chose the short cut to-night. He turned into it, walking free and strong.

Girls had meant nothing in the boy's life. That was because they did not seem members

of his species, but something fragile, mysterious, and ranking somewhere between flowers and angels. Thus his feeling for them was composed of a little awe, more reverence, and a sense of great remoteness. Never had he observed them thoughtfully without reflecting that they were, in a general way, much like his mother, or at least of her species; therefore they must be sweet and dainty and gentle and kind. His only large swellings of the heart had come from his thinking about them, particularly Grace Elderby, now twelve years old. Nothing could have been so grand, for instance, as an opportunity to rescue her, single-handed, from wild savages that had her tied to a tree and were piling fagots about her; then to dance in fiendish glee about her as the flames rose. He would dash up on a splendid charger, his sword flashing in the sun; savage heads would roll in the dust, or fall open, cleaved in twain; there would be wild yells of fright and a wilder flight for life; he would leap from his horse, speak reassuring words while he severed her bonds, mount with her in his arms, and fly away, away, away.

Twice had Grace seen his shame. She had seen him pale, and run when her father's big, noisy dog had made a flamboyant show of rage, and she had seen him stand mute and white when Andy Carmichael, older and larger and much stronger than Ray, grossly insulted him in her presence. The Elderby dog was the terror that had closed the short cut,—closed it to Ray alone.

Thus into the short cut swung Ray, walking strong and free, the ache in his throat not so painful as before. The dog would be on guard, and the boy was empty-handed.

The shadows were deep under the trees, or possibly the dog's hate and rage blinded him to what the buckskin had seen, or perhaps he was of a different metal. Near the rear of the premises the big brute came in so great a fury that he broke through the palings. The ensuing collision—for the boy stood his ground,—was so violent that Ray went down underneath, and an ecstasy thrilled him when the flame swished and the smoke stung, and he felt something sink into his shoulder and a stifle of hot, foamy breath in his face.

It seemed to have been easily and quickly done. True, when he came erect he was weak and tired, and swayed dizzily, and wondered why. As, without the least exultation, or even triumph, or even gratification, he looked down at his work, and saw with surprise how deeply the ground had been torn up, two men with sticks came running out,—evidently there had been some noise, despite all his care for silence. One was Mr. Elderby, the other his coachman. The gentleman stood in astonishment as the boy, controlling his heavy breathing, stepped into the moonlight and calmly faced him.

"Ray Gilbert! What are you doing here, at this time of night?"

"I was walking in the path. Your dog attacked me."

"What did you kill him with?"

"My hands."

Mr. Elderby stood in wonder as he studied the lad. "I'm thankful to God that you are alive. It's a miracle." He noticed that Ray's clothing was torn nearly to rags. In compassion he laid a hand on Ray's shoulder, quickly withdrew it, and examined it in the moonlight. "You are hurt, my son. Come into the house. I'll put you to bed and send for the doctor and your parents."

"Thank you, sir; I have something to do."

"But you must have attention.—Jake, hitch up the bay to the light buggy,—quick,—and drive him home."

"No, sir; but I'm much obliged. I have something to do. Good-night." The shadows enveloped him.

The short cut led him over a sharp hill and into the road again, and there he sat on the

bank till his strength came back. Then he went on till he arrived at a gate leading into a private avenue. The ache in his throat was nearly gone. Passing quietly up the driveway and round to the rear of the house, he came to a window, which was open at the top, and sharply tapped on the glass.

"Who's that?" came a voice.

"Dress and come out, Andy Carmichael. I'm Ray Gilbert."

The sash was thrown up and the boy glowered in the opening. "Ray Gilbert!—you cowardly, sneaking puppy! What do you want?"

"I want to see you. Dress and come out. Don't wake anybody."

He spoke quietly, trying to appear his usual self lest this monster, this overshadowing terror of his life, should see whatever it was that had frightened the horse and slain the dog. This was the boy who had beaten him so often and with such merciless, sodden, gluttonous enjoyment; the boy who, when he did not care to give the beatings himself—no provocation was ever needed,—would stand threateningly by and let the smaller boys, even to the little ones with soft, puny fists, beat the coward as long as they wished, merely for the love of beating what did not resist; the boy whose lies had brought undeserved whippings from the teacher; the boy who openly insulted him whenever he pleased, and, worst of all, had humiliated him before Grace Elderby. It was the presence of this boy at the party that evening, and the looks that he gave Ray, and the sly tortures he inflicted, that had sent up the curtain on the night's drama.

In wondering surprise Andy studied the bare-headed, ragged, dirty figure standing in the moonlight; and as crimson looks a muddy brown in such a light, he mistook the smears on the other's face and the dark splotches on his clothing. What could the creature want of him at this time of night and with that extraordinary appearance? Likely Ray had been set upon and was seeking any refuge. It would be joyous to complete the work that the others had begun. Andy soon emerged from the house.

"Come this way," said his mysterious visitor, and perplexed Andy followed him to the rear of the fowl-house, where the light was clear. The flame and smoke of the old grass fire were strong in the air.

Ray halted, and faced him.

"Take off your coat," he quietly said, removing his own tattered garment.

"What for?" with a slight quaver composed of anger—and something else; for there was a touch of the uncanny here.

WHITE HANDS

By MILDRED I. McNEAL-SWEENEY

The very snowiest hand that ever
The lip of true man kissed;
Soft as a flower and with faint veinings
Of May blue toward the wrist,—
So fine, so frail it is, we ponder
The drudgery it has missed.

My own is white, too, lying beside it,
But there's a trace of horn
In the inner palm—work's mark. Dost see
Her little look of scorn
At hearing of the hundred guises
My busy hand has worn?

Hers is for jewelery and gloving,
Innocent of all price;
Mine has the strength of striving in it—
White as it is,—weighs twice
In the world's affairs, for gentle color
And unspoiled energies.

"We are going to fight."

"Fight, eh! What put that into your fool head?" Under the initial impulse from the challenge, Andy was all heat and eagerness, and he bristled and swelled; but though, in some vital ways, human sense is less acute than brute sense, Andy did feel something of what the buckskin had felt, something of what had slain the dog, and his heart thumped with a strange heaviness. "What do you want to fight for? I'd beat the life out of you."

It failed of the effect intended, and Andy found his head suddenly twisted to one side by a slap on the cheek. He stepped back, white with fury, tossed his coat aside, and hurled himself upon the slender figure waiting with such unearthly composure.

Dawn was flooding the east, and still the boy lurched and floundered on and on, keeping to the road that led into the wilderness. Occasionally he would stop for a minute's rest and to listen for the baying of Frazier's bloodhound; and he wondered, in a purely detached and scientific way, whether he had sufficient strength and acuteness left for another such grapple. It was merely an engaging speculation, and was complicated with his determination to perform another task before his work was done. It would nearly break his heart to be stopped now. Likely the dog would not attack him, but merely hold him at bay until the pursuers came to his summons; but if the dog would not attack, then the boy must. Would strength or even life be left for the last and most important of all the tasks to which the Hand was leading him?—for there was a good distance yet to be covered, and work to be done at the end of it. He was thankful that the ache had entirely left his throat and that a strange warmth had kindled in his breast.

Perhaps they had not really meant what they said about setting Frazier's bloodhound to run him down. The remark had come from the yardman, not Mr. Carmichael himself, who had appeared too stunned to think of anything but his son. If they had wished to kill the outlaw, or take him and send him to jail, why had they not seized and bound him instead of staring at him so queerly, and then the yardman foolishly saying, as Ray staggered away and they picked up the limp figure, that they would get Frazier's bloodhound and set him on the trail? They were two strong men against a mere boy, who was so exhausted that only with a mighty effort could he stand. It was Andy's final despairing cry that had waked them.

Without either triumph or regret the boy struggled on. The broadening of day made him partly aware of the savage presence that he made and of the likelihood that traffic might open on the road at any time. Some of his clothing was gone, and he had bound the remaining strips and rags about him as best he could. He did not know about the aspect of his face and hair, but he realized that should any one encounter him in the road he might be forced to do something distasteful, and that the urgent task ahead might be interrupted.

A horseman and two market wagons passed at intervals, but the boy was hidden at the roadside. So he reeled on and on, and so he came at last to the great pine. There he turned out and crawled as much as walked through the trees and undergrowth to the summit of a low ridge, where he felt the sunshine fall on his half-naked back. It was so luxurious that he paused in the full glare of it, and slowly turned, as one very cold before a warming fire, and reveled in it. With every moment he felt it pouring into him, tingling softly as it ran. It was odd with what cheerful industry it hunted out the coldest places in him and kindled snug little fires under them. Most of all it gave attention to the warm place that had already started in the center, and that one woke to a

Breaking Through

BY W. C. MORROW

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wonderful glow. Thus refreshed, he descended the slope on the farther side and came to a morass threaded by a friendly stream. At the edge of the bog he halted and looked keenly about. It had been two years since his last visit to this spot, and, though his memory of the woods was excellent, he now found himself dull and his vision bad. Ordinarily he would have found at once what he was seeking. Up and down along the margin he stumbled, straining his dim eyes, crawling sometimes and using groping hands in the search. Surely no one else could have come upon this remote spot, found the treasure, and taken it away!

At last! It had seemed to him a very long time; but all else was submerged in the joy of the first triumph, the first elation, that the lad had felt in many, many a day. Every shadow that had lain on his conscience vanished, every shame that had cursed his years was swept away, all bitterness took flight, and something fine and sweet raced through him deliciously.

There was no waste of precious time in hunting for something with which to dig. Then, too, the glorious sun had mounted, and was pouring its flood of light and warmth on his work and him. Like the tines of a digging-fork his fingers sank into the ground.

The precious treasure, hugged gently, reverently, with a fierce sense of protection, was balm to every hurt. With it thus clasped, the boy laboriously made the ascent of the ridge on his return, and paused on the summit. There was something strange in the distance with which the descending slope to the road stretched so far, so bewilderingly far. He contemplated it, and wondered if he could compass it in a lifetime. The impulse to go on—for this last task was only half done—overcame the check from the illusion, and he started down. His knees developed a foolish way of suddenly flexing and seating him hard on the ground. At first it was annoying, but when it happened the second time the absurdity of it, and the ridiculous suddenness of the surprise that it caused, made the boy laugh aloud. It astonished him to hear himself laugh, for that was very unusual, and he wondered. But he rose, staggered on, and found himself chuckling inside,—a most astonishing thing! He could not imagine why he was doing it. When he dropped the third time his voice rang in so loud and merry a laugh that two blue jays came and scolded him terrifically, and he laughed at them till his tears ran. He was so absurdly happy that he feared he would hug his treasure too hard.

If only his mother were with him, that she might see how funny it all was, and laugh and be happy with him, and then walk with him hand in hand through the beautiful woods, while he showed her all the wonderful things that he knew! But no; his sisters and his father must be with them,—and Grace, of course,—and Andy, too,—and the teacher; and dear old grandmother must not be left out. What a glorious time they would all have together!

The boy started, for a sweet, coaxing smother had suddenly fallen on him. He fought it away and rose with great difficulty and in some alarm lest he should not reach the road. On he lurched, clinging to the bushes as he swayed, trying not to laugh, for he had an idea that he was very crass and silly. He saw the road, only a rod away, and suddenly reflected that he was not presentable. Though staying till night would delay the completion of his task, there was no help for it, and he was content, and laughed because he was. And he knew that he really needed rest; for suppose his legs should practice those grotesque eccentricities in the



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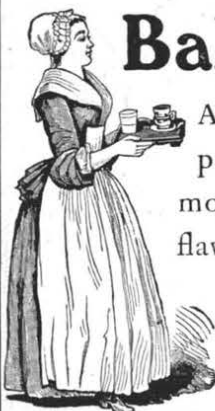
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road, and somebody should see! He sat down, carefully guarding his treasure, to wait in happy patience. He would not sleep, and so lose something of his conscious peace, something of thinking about what was going to happen at the end. No, he *must* not sleep.

The frantically joyous barking of a dog standing over him—not at all like the deep baying of Frazier's bloodhound,—woke the boy, and he tried to raise his head, but it fell back like lead. He laughed drowsily in quiet happiness, as he feebly patted the devoted head.

"Dear old Cap," he said. "You came, did not you?"

Messengers from Elderby's and Carmichael's had brought strange news to the boy's parents. In alarm they had started out in the surrey, taking Cap, in the sure faith that he would find their son. They had seen that Andy was recovering,—he had been much more frightened than hurt. It was they whose crashing through the bushes the boy heard after Cap had announced his find. They halted and paled when they saw the torn, bruised, helpless figure smiling at them from the ground, and so full of loving gladness merely to see them that there was no room for surprise at their being there. The mother was quicker than the father; she ran forward and fell on her knees beside her son.

"My boy!" she cried in a choke.

He took her hand and smiled into her face. In all her life she had never seen a smile so sweet, so happy. With his free hand he lifted his treasure.

"Mother," radiantly, "here it is!"

"What, my poor dear?"

"Don't you remember? I told you two years ago that I'd found it, and you said you'd be very glad if I'd bring it to you when I came this way again."

She opened the parcel, wrapped with so fond care in leaves and damp moss.

"Why, it's the rare and beautiful fern, and you were taking it to me! Bless your dear heart!" and, much to his surprise, she began to cry.

John D. Rockefeller on a Bicycle

THERE lives in Philadelphia a former Cleveland woman, who, not many years ago, knew the Rockefeller family intimately, and she tells to-day of one little happening, which came under her eye in those early days, and which throws an eminently characteristic if not a wholly new light upon the great oil magnate.

"It was at the time of the bicycle craze," says she, "and in the Rockefeller stables, out at the Forest Hill country place, were quite a dozen wheels of all sizes and makes for the use of the family and its guests. One afternoon a lot of us had gone down to start for a little ride about the place when Mr. Rockefeller appeared and joined us, accompanied as he always was on such excursions by a certain 'Tom' something, his instructor in riding. We had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile, and were wheeling along a sort of bridle path, when 'Tom,' who was in the lead, turned and nodded significantly at Mr. Rockefeller, almost at the same instant making a sharp turn to the right. His employer tried to make the same turn and promptly fell off. So did I, and the two or three who brought up the end of the line. It was a decidedly sharp turn, and no one short of a skilled wheelman would be expected to take it in the saddle.

"No talk of that sort, however, would satisfy Mr. Rockefeller. His man 'Tom' had done it, and he was going to do it himself. 'There's going to be nothing on these grounds you can do and I can't,' said he. It was not only that, though. He was insistent that we should all of us keep at the silly turn till we, too, should ride around it, and there we stuck, the entire half dozen of us, for more than an hour, till at length each one had made the trip to the satisfaction of the host.

"I had gone out for pleasure; I came home worn out,—but to have heard 'John D.' talk about it all evening through you might have supposed he had done something praiseworthy as well as supremely selfish."

How many people have bartered all the joy of living for the doubtful pleasure of snipping coupons—Bartlett.

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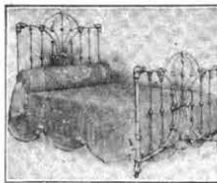
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